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USAWC FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH PROJECT

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MEDIA IMPACT:
WHY THE ARMY MUST PLAN TO SUPPORT THE MEDIA

by

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: MEDIA IMPACT: WHY THE ARMY MUST PLAN TO SUPPORT
THE MEDIA

FORMAT: Fellowship Research Project

Date: 1 June 1996

PAGES: 24

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This paper takes a historical view of the relationship between the military and the media. The impact of the media is examined in each major conflict, starting with the Revolution War and ending with Somalia. The manner in which the military has interacted with the media is examined. The extent of media influence on the American public is reviewed and its impact on the military discussed. The relationship between favorable media coverage and access to the battlefield is reviewed and examples of strong leadership countering negative media given. Arguments for and against full media access to the battlefield are discussed in terms of the First Amendment and the military's need to maintain operational security. Finally reasons as to why the Army leadership should plan for full support of the media in all future operations presented.

The purpose of this paper to provide insight to senior military leaders and operational planners as to why the Army should provide full support to the media. This will be accomplished by looking through the lens of history for an overview of the relationship between the military and media and how it has evolved. Starting with the American Revolution and ending with Somalia, the extent of media impact in each conflict and ensuing military interaction is reviewed. Next issues arising from the media perceived right to full access and what effects this might have on the military is discussed. Finally recommendations are presented for Army leadership to incorporate media support during future operations planning.

Since the founding of the United States the use of military force stirs public interest and imagination like no other endeavor this nation undertakes. As the public's desire for more information grew, the nation's media attempted to serve this need. Early on, during the American Revolution, the news media emerged as a powerful force to be reckoned with.¹ One of the greatest users of the press in that era was none other than Samuel Adams, who engaged in propaganda campaigns that smeared Tory reputations. Writers, like Adams were instrumental in inspiring the country to take up arms and eventually to win independence.²

The evidence seems to suggest that George Washington was acutely aware of the unique form of government that America would have, where all power ultimately would lie with the people. In an effort to court the citizenry, Washington supported American newspapers that were widely read and that strongly favored the revolution.³

"George Washington understood that the war he fought was in part a public opinion war. He wanted victories on the battlefield but refused to achieve them at the expense of the people he hoped to influence."⁴ Despite intense public interest in news of the war there was no distinct press corps engaged in war reporting. News papers relied on the chance arrival of private letters, official and semi-official messages for coverage. "This lack of an organized press corps of war correspondents continued through the War of 1812."⁵ However, the importance of a free press did not escape the framers of the constitution. As William Kennedy noted in his introduction to *The Military and the Media : Why the Press Cannot Be Trusted to Cover a War:*

Every time a society has permitted its military establishment to insulate itself against effective public scrutiny that military establishment has ended up destroying the people it was supposed to protect. As classical scholars steeped in the process by which the Roman republic became a military dictatorship, and as grandsons of a generation that saw a military dictatorship established in England under Oliver Cromwell, the American Founding Fathers sought to write into the U.S. Constitution a set of checks and balances that they hoped would immunize the new republic against this military virus.⁶

During the War of 1812 the media failed to play any significant role, letters still provided the only journalistic presence during combat operations. However, it is interesting to note that although the war was fought primarily over England's abuses of American Maritime shipping neutrality, the New England press did not clamor for war. Newspapers from the Western United States demanded war, to stop the shipment of firearms supplied by England through Canada. These weapons were being used by the Indians to kill settlers on the American frontier.⁷

During the Mexican War of 1846-47 the modern war correspondent first emerged. During that conflict, newspaper reporters enjoyed liberal access to combat operations, and endured little or no restrictions. In its attempt to satisfy the public's desire for news from the battlefield, the media established a 2,000 mile communications link that delivered information to the Washington media, repeatedly ahead of government couriers.⁸ However the line between combatants and pure correspondents was blurred; many correspondents still went to war primarily as fighters.⁹

"The Civil War was the first major American conflict covered by significant numbers of journalist, turned war correspondents."¹⁰ During this bitter conflict advancements in technology now provided, quicker access to reports from battlefield. The telegraph, which now covered the entire United States, allowed the media to file their stories in a matter of hours instead of days. This enabled publishers to provide details of the conflict to the information starved public within hours of the action. Now the race was on to be the first with the news. In past reporting on war, information provided the public did not impact the ongoing military operation. With the advent of the telegraph and it's extensive network, competition between rival newspapers now led to reporting which could jeopardize the operational security of the military campaign.¹¹

For the senior commanders of both the Federal and Confederate forces, the activities of the media were disturbing. Since reporters could relay their copy to their home office in a matter of hours, if not minutes, information published was often known both to the public and the enemy's spies before the armies in the field could execute their instructions.¹² The seeds of discord were now sown. The media in its haste to report, could now jeopardize the security of on going military operations.

This was the beginning and the essence of the love-hate relationship between the military and the media that lasts till this day. As a result some generals excluded the press from operations either temporarily or permanently. "General Sherman, for instance, upon discovering that his operation in Kentucky was exposed by the media, banished reporters from the lines and promised summary punishment to all who reported his position, strength or troop movements."¹³

General Grant also regulated the press which accompanied his army on the assumption that war correspondents were under the authority of the area military commander. In the Confederacy, correspondents usually were excluded from the front lines, and the small size of the southern press corps made it impossible to provide coverage.¹⁴ However, General Robert E. Lee was also distracted by the occasional indiscretion of the press and complained vigorously to the Confederate secretary of war, saying, "All such publications are injurious to us. We have difficulties enough interposed by our enemies without having them augmented by our friends."¹⁵

"In both cases, attention to operational security suddenly became notably more sensitive than in previous wars."¹⁶ As Felman went on to note:

Attempts to censor the press were initially clumsy, sometimes illegal, and pitted the antithetical goals of the press and the military against each other as never before in American history. Generals began to cultivate a hatred for journalists, scorning the misinformation they spread and fearing the damage they could do to military security and their military careers. General Sherman vociferously disapproved of the government policy of allowing newsmen to accompany the armies.¹⁷

Many of the censorship rules developed during the Civil war laid the foundation for the measures used today.¹⁸

Most people argue that the Spanish American War was a press war, started by the yellow journalism of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. The competition between these two men and their respective publishing empires led to the cultivation of a war psychosis among the American public and members of congress.¹⁹ An example of this media mind set is the telegram Hearst sent to one of his illustrators, Frederick Remington. Remington cabled Hearst that everything was quiet in Cuba. There would be no war and he wished to return. Hearst's famous response told Remington to remain in Cuba and furnish pictures and he, Hearst, would furnish the war.²⁰ "Hearst's cockiness swelled on the eve of the battle when a headline in one of his newspapers proclaimed: HOW DO YOU LIKE THE JOURNAL'S WAR?"²¹

However, not all authors agree. Johanna Neuman argues that there is reason to question the media role played in the commencement of hostilities. It should be remembered that for all the exaggerated headlines in the press McKinley was not rushed into war. He took nearly thirteen months, from his inauguration in March of 1897 to the beginning of hostilities in April of 1898. Neuman states that, "journalism's influence on policy is often overrated, that political leaders have more sway than journalist in shaping public opinion," and finally that "diplomats are responsible for diplomacy, no matter how exasperating the press exaggerations."²²

Every national leader now knows that information is power and the ability to control the flow of that information is critical. With this in mind, President McKinley became the first president to assign a White House staffer to brief the Washington media daily.²³ With these briefings and other changes increasing media access to the president and his staff, McKinley centralized informational power at the White House and made it the headquarters for news concerning foreign and military affairs.²⁴

While the roughly 200 correspondents covering the conflict had few restrictions placed on them some instances of censorship as well as exclusion from the combat zones occurred. Additionally it should be noted that after the war, General Pershing excluded the press entirely from the Mindoo Island pacification operation in the Philippines.²⁵ The distrust of the media by the military continued.

As the United States entered into World War I President Woodrow Wilson understood that the national will to make sacrifices and preserve would to a large degree determine the outcome of the war. He recognized that to motivate a modern nation to participate in the totality of mechanized war would require the full attention not only of the military but of those who shaped public opinion.²⁶ Within two weeks after declaring war, he appointed journalist George Creel to establish a Committee on Public Information.²⁷ This committee coordinated government propaganda efforts and served as the government's liaison with the media around the world. Although, censorship of combat information was already widespread, owing in part to the framework established by Britain and France, Wilson imposed strict guidelines on media coverage.

American newsmen who wished to report the war had to be accredited by a lengthy process that included a personal appearance before the Secretary of War, an oath to write the truth, and submission of a \$10,000 bond to insure their proper conduct in the field. In France, they submitted their writing to military censors who operated under the intelligence directorate (G-2), the arm of the Army most certain to protect even the least significant military secrets.²⁸

By enforcing these strict censorship rules Wilson endeavored to keep information on the horrors of trench warfare out of the media and block any information which would shake the nation's confidence in the war effort. For violating censorship rules, a reporter would have his credentials revoked.²⁹ The media, reluctantly accepted these demands and lent their support to a campaign of propaganda directed against Imperial Germany. However, "critics argued then, as they do today, that protecting every detail of American involvement undermines the public's understanding of a war."³⁰

The Creel Committee however, was later criticized for its excesses. The government's prosecution of movie producer Robert Goldstein lay at the heart of this controversy. Goldstein produced a movie which showed British soldiers bayoneting women and children during the Revolutionary War. The judge in the case acknowledged that although such offenses may have occurred, the film caused the public to question the good faith of our ally Great Britain.

Goldstein was sentenced under the Sedition Act, to 10 years in prison and fined \$5,000. Passed in 1918 this act made it a crime to say anything scornful of disrespectful of the government the flag, the military uniform or the Constitution.³¹

Given the atmosphere of censorship and exaggerated propaganda in this countries media during World War I, it would be assumed that the military and the media relationship would be strained upon entry into World War II. However, the leadership in Washington learned from the experience of the Creel Committee and the delayed criticism that followed. Fearing that outright propaganda would backfire, President Roosevelt appointed Elmer Davis to head the newly created Office of War Information (OWI) which by most accounts did a good job keeping the troops and the general public informed.³²

Understanding that bad news would become public anyway and undermine the allied cause, Davis developed the "strategy of truth." Winston Churchill understood the need for this type of honest media reporting when he took to the floor of the House of Commons after the disaster at Dunkirk.

In what is considered one of the most masterful speeches of the century, Churchill informed the nation of its reversal. He talked of the loss of 30,000 men, of the abandonment of 1,000 weapons and the country's entire fleet of armored carriers. He looked to the "new world" to save the old, and called on his countrymen to defend their island. "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, in the hills we shall never surrender." His Words have become immortalized as the classic statement of a will to fight. But the most remarkable aspect of the speech is not the call to arms, it is that Churchill did not mince words about the extent of the defeat. "What has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster," he said. Because of his candor, and his eloquence, the audience was free to accept that an armada of little ships with average citizens had saved the British army to fight another day. If he had underplayed the disaster, if he had oversold the rescue, distrust would have been his legacy.³³

Even though the United States used the "strategy of truth," censorship still existed and the media and public accepted it as necessary for national security reasons. War correspondents were trusted, held accountable and given unrestricted access to most battlefields. General

Eisenhower wrote in his book *Crusade in Europe*, "The commander in the field must never forget it is his duty to cooperate with the heads of his government in the task of maintaining a civilian morale that will be equal to every purpose...and the principal agency to accomplish that task was the press."³⁴

The senior American leadership of World War II, with few exceptions understood that the media responded to honesty and forthrightness. Despite the cooperation between the military and the media some argue that the press was deluded into insulating the American public from the harsh realities of war.³⁵ What ever the view, most authors acknowledge this war as the high point in the military/media relationship. A war where the media was part of the team. "These correspondents had power and influence and celebrity. They donned the uniforms of the units they covered, proudly, and stifled news that would hurt morale at home."³⁶

At the onset of the Korean War, the manor in which the senior military leadership handled the media changed. "General MacArthur chose not to impose the type of field censorship used during World War II. Reporters found themselves on their own in battle, facing harsh criticism from MacArthur's staff for filing stories without getting minimal military assistance."³⁷

When the Chinese communists entered the war and pushed the United Nations forces back down the peninsula, MacArthur became enraged over daily press security breaches. Formal rigid censorship was imposed and correspondents, placed under the jurisdiction of the army. For any violation of a long list of instructions correspondents could be punished by a series of measures beginning with a suspension of privileges and extending to deportation or even trial by court-martial.³⁸ General MacArthur expelled seventeen reporters for violations of the strict censorship rules.

These regulations covered information that affected operational security, as well as information that might influence the morale of the troops or embarrass the United States. Many members of the media regarded these restrictions as political censorship and given the fact that military information officers provoked the press on numerous occasions by withholding

information on matters that had little to do with military security their views may have had merit.³⁹

After MacArthur was relieved, the censorship policies were relaxed, and the press was allowed considerable access to battlefield operations throughout the remainder of the war.⁴⁰ These complaints came to a climax in 1952 when the Defense Department adopted a uniform censorship plan for all the services, which forbade censorship, except for security reasons. However, as Felman noted: "The perennial debate as to what constituted security had not gone away."⁴¹

"The Vietnam War represented the High water mark of press freedom on the battlefield."⁴² The United States' direct military involvement in Vietnam began in February 1962 with the formation of the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Defense Secretary McNamara reported, to President Kennedy, that the major part of the United States military involvement would be completed by the end of 1965. In so doing, the administration raised the expectations of the American people regarding the outcome of the conflict.

The message to the public indicated that this was to be a quick, easy, and low cost operation. As in Korea the American public and the media initially accepted the rationale of stopping communist expansion and supported the intervention. However, the increasing escalation of military involvement, with increasing American casualties and no resolution in sight, support began to erode. Howard K. Smith, one of America's noted television journalists, commented in 1990 on this loss of support as follows:

I think the American people supported that war right up to 67'-68' and then it (the support) turned because it lasted too long. I'm surprised that the war lasted as long as it did. We showed more stamina than I thought we would have for a dirty little war that was going on indecisively forever. The American people were all right up until about the middle of '67, then they began to turn sour and they didn't turn sour because of the threat of nuclear weapons. They turned sour because Americans were being killed at an enormous rate and really unnecessarily. They couldn't see the reasons for it. The reasons were not articulated to them. The reason I think we lost that war (is) we didn't articulate our purposes very well.⁴³

Barry Zorthian, the chief U.S. spokesman in Saigon for four years during this period, remarked: "Vietnam was the first open war in modern history. Vietnam was conducted without press censors and with unprecedented access for the media to the battlefield, and to the participants, from the commander down to the lowest private. The result was a fishbowl atmosphere...Censorship was considered a number of times, at least twice formally, with teams from the Department of Defense coming out to examine the desirability of imposing censorship. In both instances it was turned down."⁴⁴

Many military officers still subscribe to the belief that television media coverage and biased reporting turned the public against the war, and undermined the chances for victory. They cite images of bloodied Americans, body bags, indecisive battles and civilian casualties.⁴⁵

One of the most disturbing aspects of Media coverage was the weekly body count, where network anchors would read the released military figures of Americans killed, wounded, and missing.⁴⁶ However, "Attributing disenchantment to bloody televised images ignores findings that fewer than two percent of television presentations during the war showed any blood. The fact, not the image, of body bags was the important factor."⁴⁷

As Peter Braestrup notes, "There is a widespread misperception that CBS, NBC, and ABC brought Vietnam's horrors nightly into the American living room and thereby undercut public support for the war. In fact, although about half of all the TV reports filed from Vietnam in 1965-70 were about military action, only about three percent showed heavy battle." Braestrup further argues that the television media was not the deciding factor in shaping public opinion toward Vietnam. "Opinion polls for Vietnam (no censorship, television news) and the Korean War (censorship, no TV) show that public support for both wars declined at the same rate."⁴⁸

The number of dead soldiers returning home and the decline of support in those specific communities had a direct correlation. The same correlation led to mounting protest in Great Britain against the Boer War and to riots in New York during the American Civil War. However, support for Vietnam fell below 50 percent only after President Johnson implied in his

March 1968 speech that he considered the war unwinnable.⁴⁹ Felman argues that Johnson, in giving up, was directly influenced by "media spin."

This "media spin" equated to the biased media reporting of the Tet offensive of 1968, in which both the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong were overwhelming defeated. The media gave the American public the impression that this was an American failure, not a tremendous tactical victory. The straw that broke President Johnson's will was Walter Cronkite giving his opinion on national television that the war did not work and that the United States had to start thinking about getting out.⁵⁰

The bias of the media remained one sided throughout the conflict, with very few of the atrocities committed by the North Vietnamese being reported. Robert Elegant points to the example of how the media provided extensive coverage of the United States Army's murder of approximately one hundred civilians at My Lai, but failed to give equal attention to the massacre of thousands by the North Vietnamese at Hue during the Tet offensive of 1968.⁵¹ Even Howard K. Smith noted this negative slant when he commented:

Now I have to admit something that I hate to admit. I hate to say my medium was very greatly responsible, after everyone became disenchanted, for our defeat. Journalism, I think by nature, consists of mainly negatives. Things that go right are not really used; people are not really interested in them. Things that go wrong are used and I think later on in the Vietnam War, the media, all of the media, became obsessed with the negative and pointed only to flaws and looked at those of other people.⁵²

Primarily, it was the public's disenchantment with US casualties, the failure of the government to clearly articulate the reasons for the war and biased media reporting that eroded American support for the Vietnam conflict. Richard Nixon's comments, in his memoirs, clarifies the reasons the military must have a clear viable policy regarding the media and the impact on the nation of not having one:

American news media had come to dominate domestic opinion about the war's purpose and conduct....In each night's TV news and each morning's paper the war was reported battle by battle, but little or no sense of the underlying

purpose of the fighting was conveyed. Eventually this contributed to the impression that we were fighting in military and moral quicksand, rather than toward an important and worthwhile objective. More than ever before, television showed the terrible suffering and sacrifice of war. Whatever the intention behind such relentless and literal reporting of the war, the result was a serious demoralization of the home front, raising the question whether America would ever again be able to fight an enemy abroad with unity and strength of purpose at home.⁵³

Operation Urgent Fury commenced with the invasion of Grenada by American forces during the early morning hours of 25 October 1983. President Reagan, decided that the seizure of that island's government, 10 days earlier by a radical Marxist faction, threatened American interests and would not be tolerated. Reagan quickly ordered the military into action to secure the island and rescue American citizens. Distrusting the media, and fearing leaks which might jeopardize the operation, the administration keep the operation secret from the public and the press.

After the invasion began President Reagan took the lead in shaping public opinion by clearly outlining the reasons for this intervention. Although, the public supported the president the media was outraged that it was not part of the invasion force. The military kept the reporters off the island for the first three days, resulting in unanimous media opposition to this exclusion, by the military. "All attempts by reporters to stage an invasion of their own were quickly rebuffed by the U.S. Navy...Complaints were even voiced that in order to defend freedom in Grenada the United States was abandoning freedom at home."⁵⁴

However, the American public did not share the media view of the imposed censorship. Polls taken after the raid indicated public opinion was eight-to-one, in favor of the military curbing of the press. It seems that the American public agreed with the military, that the lesson learned from Vietnam was that to wage successful war, keep the media from the battlefield.⁵⁵ As a direct result, members of the media sought injunctive relief in district court to force the government to grant access. The court disagreed with the media and held that an injunction

would limit the range of options available to military commanders in the future, thereby gravely damaging the national interest.⁵⁶

As a direct consequence of the media dissatisfaction over Grenada, the Department of Defense appointed a panel, Chaired by retired Major General Winant Sidle, known as the Sidle Commission. The commission, agreeing that the U.S. media should cover American military operations to maximum extent possible, consistent with mission security, established general principles, that still influence the military/media relationship today.⁵⁷ Caspar Weinberger promised to implement of all the recommendations given to him, the two most important included the formation of press pools and the encouragement of the military to conduct planning for media coverage concurrently with operational planning.⁵⁸ The media pool concept was tested in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war. Although problems still existed, both the military and media considered the press pools a success.

In December of 1989, as the United States military executed Operation Just Cause with the invasion of the Republic of Panama, lessons from Grenada and the Persian Gulf seemed to be lost. Public affairs issues were again omitted from operational planning. The time constraints of Grenada did not apply to the lack of media consideration on this operation. After months of planning by Southern Command no formal public affairs plan for the operation existed.⁵⁹ When the National Media Pool was activated to provide media coverage of the invasion, journalists anticipated being first on the scene of the combat. However, they did not arrive until four hours after the fighting began and were prevented from filing their dispatches for an additional six hours.⁶⁰

Citing secrecy concerns, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney waited until the last moment to activate the Washington based press pool. This delay and lack of formal planning by the military led to a lack of logistical support for the media. Further delays were encountered since by this time all helicopters were dedicated to military missions. James Pontuso points out, "Combat officers argued that valuable transport and logistical resources were squandered on the press operation."⁶¹ As the media came to find out, there was no deliberate restriction of press

coverage during the Panama operation. However, the bureaucratic tie-ups and logistical problems encountered, in providing for the feeding, housing, communications and transportation of the more than 1200 media correspondents covering Just Cause, could be just as restrictive. It was now clear to all that formal planning for the support of the media must be part of every future operation.⁶²

As Operation Desert Shield exploded into the high-tech battlefield of Desert Storm, the relationship between the military and the media was once more the source of controversy. This conflict became a landmark in the media coverage of war. As Felman wrote:

Desert Storm graphically demonstrated the culmination of a technological revolution in both the way wars will be waged and reported henceforth. Instantaneous satellite feeds and cellular phones represent a quantum leap in communications technology from the war coverage of just three decades ago....Who can forget the reporters ducking Tomahawk cruise missiles during live reports from downtown Baghdad and the spectacular living-color fireworks display of an Iraqi Scud missile intercepted by American Patriot missiles in the night skies over Saudi Arabia and Israel?⁶³

However, even in light of this impressive media technology, the military was ready to handle the press in the same manner it would liberate Kuwait, with precision weapons and expert control of the battlefield. Precision weapons as related to the press came in the form of military briefers who were, articulate, well rehearsed, and displayed more presence and knowledge, than the inexperienced and sometimes rowdy media that covered these briefings. It appears that the media along with the American public rediscovered the tradition of integrity among military professionals. "General Schwarzkopf understood, both intuitively and from experience, that it is much better to tell the truth. Truth has a legitimacy, a coherence, and a dignity that is very powerful."⁶⁴

With the media ability and willingness to broadcast instantaneous transmission of press briefings without editing, or contextualizing the remarks, the polished military spokesmen were able to bypass reporters and make their points directly to the American public. As William Kennedy goes on to note: "In contrast, reporters at these briefings came across as distinctly

unappealing, their customarily excitable demeanor...was exacerbated by the process of demanding information from those reluctant to provide it. Reporters' visibility to the public may have contributed to their appearance of being inadequately prepared to cover the war, lacking knowledge of military matters, and sometimes displaying downright incompetence."⁶⁵

The control of the battlefield as regards the media, came in the form of press pools. The large number of news representatives involved in reporting the conflict made the most compelling argument for the use of the pool system. In August of 1990 less than 20 reporters were in the zone of operation. By the commencement of the ground war in February 1991 the number of media present had risen to over 1600. An escort system in conjunction with the media pool ensured that the reporters would be provided access to the battlefield without overwhelming the local commanders.

In January 1991, the Department of Defense provided the media with the "Press Ground Rules for Operation Desert Shield/Storm." Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and others explained that these 12 rules were shaped by the lessons of Vietnam.⁶⁶ Voluntary acceptance of these reporting guidelines was required for correspondents seeking accreditation to the Riyadh information center.⁶⁷ The stage was now set for complete route of the press corps. As David Paletz notes in *Taken by Storm*:

Secretary of State James Baker may have been joking but his comment has more than a grain of truth: "The Gulf War was quite a victory. But who could not be moved by the sight of that poor demoralized rabble--outwitted, outflanked, outmaneuvered by the U.S. military. But I think, given time, the press will bounce back (quoted in the Raleigh News and Observer, march 27, 1991, p.2D).⁶⁸

Despite the near total control of the media during Desert Shield/Storm the press expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the pool system. Many reporters felt the pools limited the news from the field by forcing them into controlled, chaperoned groups. Many argue this was the exact intent of the military and in so doing inhibited media news gathering. Citing violations of their First Amendment rights members of the media once again sought an injunction to escape

the restrictions of the press pools. The court found the request for injunction moot, since the war was over and failed to grant a declaratory judgment, opting instead to leave the matter for a later date.⁶⁹

However, the majority of the Americans back home were highly satisfied with the coverage of the war. "In a poll, 80 percent of Americans said they approved of all military restrictions on the reporting of the war and 60 per cent thought there should have been more."⁷⁰ These polls indicate the military understood to obtain favorable press coverage they must win quickly with few allied casualties and present their story, via live media, directly to the American public.⁷¹

As Philip Taylor concluded in his book *War and the Media*: "the coalition therefore demonstrated that modern democracies could fight wars, or at least a war of this rather special kind, in the television age without allowing too much of war's 'visible brutality' to appear in the front rooms of their publics. Only that which was deemed acceptable by the warring partners was permitted...Although the Gulf War will undoubtedly be remembered as CNN's war or television's war, it was no such thing. The conflict belonged to the coalition's armed forces, and to the victors went the spoils of the information war."⁷²

Shortly after Kuwait was liberated, Major General (Ret.) and CNN analyst, Perry Smith, made the point, "The center of international media is no longer in New York, London, Washington, Tokyo, or Paris. It is in Atlanta, Georgia." General Smith goes on to say, "When the chief military correspondent for CBS spends the day watching CNN and when newspaper reporters from around the world write their stories while watching CNN, the way the news is reported to the world has changed dramatically."⁷³ The world now was truly turning to "CNN." Governments around the world were now coming to grips with this fact. As author Johanna Neuman noted, "There was angst about a television network setting the agenda for international policy, worry about a public unduly swayed by the emotions of the moment...There was a feeling that power had shifted to technology, that CNN was driving diplomacy, that governments and newspapers were no longer the guardians of public information."⁷⁴

In the opinion of Admiral Jonathan Howe, USN (Ret.), former head of the United Nations effort in Somalia, the CNN/media effect focused world attention on Somalia and forced the United States to act.⁷⁵ Operation Restore Hope stood in stark contrast to the tightly managed media environment of the recently concluded Gulf War. Who could forget the images of the uncontrolled reporters, with their television lights, spotlights and flash attachments glaring in the eyes of the marines as they came ashore on live television, in December of 1992. It is not hard to visualize the needless American casualties, if hostile forces had decided to oppose the initial landings.

Commenting on the lack of control mechanisms in place to deal with the media, former Deputy Pentagon spokesman Bob Hall said: "I think the situation just got out of control. We probably should have inserted the public affairs officers first."⁷⁶ For whatever reasons, unlike Desert Storm, the military acquiesced its' leadership role as regards information, to the press. While not all agree that the CNN effect led to direct United States involvement in Somalia, no one disputes the image of a dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu led to the withdrawal of American forces from that country. American public reaction was one of anger directed at both the media and the people who spat upon the dead soldier.

Author Johanna Neuman quotes Republican senator Phil Gramm as saying, "The people who are dragging American bodies don't look very hungry to the people of Texas."⁷⁷ George Stephanopoulos, adviser to President Clinton, later acknowledged that CNN was "an immediate actor which forced the Clinton administration to respond to them as much as to actual activity."⁷⁸ Within six months the last American forces would leave Somalia.

Many of the differences between the military and the media can be explained by looking at the personalities who make up each profession. While there are notable exceptions, it helps to understand why the media continues to demand unfettered access, while the military strictly enforces its operational security.

"The Army serves as a repository of its national *values* and embeds them into its professional ethos. Proper subordination to political authority, loyalty, duty, selfless service, courage, integrity, respect for human dignity, and a sense of justice are all part of the Army's identity."⁷⁹ "Skepticism indeed, often hostility and ridicule--toward religion, patriotism, and authority in general has become the hallmark of the twentieth-century journalist...By far the greater source of misunderstanding and outright dislike between the two groups, however, lies in the realm of responsibility."⁸⁰ Kennedy continues to note the differences:

As early as the age of eighteen...and twenty-one or so in the case of commissioned officers, service members are assigned responsibilities for life, property, and mission accomplishment that most civilians never encounter in a lifetime. Very quickly with those responsibilities comes a knowledge of how easily things can go wrong and of the price to be paid for mistakes, often in terms of human life and limb.

Journalists, by and large, do not acquire anything approaching comparable responsibilities until they become editors, broadcast news directors, or television producers much later in their careers, and almost never does that involve a sense of personal responsibility in matters of life or death.⁸¹

Even with the above differences in mind, most Americans would still agree that an independent press is essential to a free and democratic government. James Pontuso argues in *War and the Media* that the role of the press is that of a watchdog. "It must be unhampered by governmental interference in order to reveal waste, fraud, corruption, inefficiency, ineptitude, bad preparation, bad tactics and all the other foibles of all-too-human nature to the harsh light of public scrutiny." Pontuso continues to note, "advocates of an unhampered press insist that the constitution specifically prohibits the Government from taking any action to suppress free expression. Of course, if, in the view of publishers or network chiefs, a story may be injurious to human lives or the national interest, they may delay its publication. The media argue that any such decision should be totally in their hands."⁸²

Critics of an unrestricted press disagree and argue, "The Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment is not a complete protection for every form of speech. If there is a compelling state interest...the Government can act to guard information." Additionally,

opponents, "insist that the people's right to know must be sacrificed in times of crisis or danger to the people's right to be protected."⁸³

Both sides of the issue have valid concerns regarding the amount of access the media should have. The press demands full access and immediate disclosure, and reserves the right to determine what should not be printed. On the other hand the military is compelled to protect information which, if made public could cost American lives and jeopardize the ongoing operation. Philip Taylor, in his book *War and the media*, moderates these divergent views:

The job of the press is to tell the truth, about right and wrong alike. Such reports can force improvements and save lives...The apparent contradiction in those views disappears in the face of one simple fact. War is an aberration. While it lasts, the practice of democracy is obscured, just as the view of a battle is restricted from any one part of the field...Editors should, by all means, stake their claim to fair reporting, but not get too upset if the answer comes slowly.¹¹

¹¹ *The Economist*, 19/1/91.⁸⁴

The deciding factor in the relationship between the military and the media is leadership. "The existence of policy that can command public support against emotional swings stirred up by television imagery is key. In the absence of persuasive government strategy, the media will be catalytic."⁸⁵ "While reporting may have an impact on policy, a savvy president will use the media to educate and press his own agenda on the public."⁸⁶

Since the founding of this nation the media has impacted the military's ability to execute the missions assigned to it by the civilian leadership. This paper through historical examination has shown that the American public demands information, through the media on the use of force by its military. But, the electorate is not demanding instant information of reporting at the expense of American lives. Military leaders must facilitate the direction and leadership of the President planing for full support of the media in all future operations. As emphasized in Field Manual 100-5, "The people of the United States do not take the commitment of their armed forces lightly...Moreover, the people expect the military to accomplish its missions in compliance with national values. The American people expect decisive victory and abhor

unnecessary casualties. They prefer quick resolution of conflicts and reserve the right to reconsider their support should any of these conditions not be met. They demand timely and accurate information on the conduct of military operations."⁸⁷

Recalling the lessons of history, regarding media impact, military commanders should understand that, "Providing early and continuous access to the press...enhances operations and strengthens public support."⁸⁸ To ensure the press has continuous access, commanders must incorporate planning from the onset of any contingency operation. This planning should provide simple ground rules for reporting of information, transportation of media throughout the theater of operations, with escorts as needed and communication links and other basic necessities as maybe required. Only in this manor will both the military and the media accomplish their respective missions for the American public and in the defense of the Constitution.

Notes

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- ³³ Ibid., 133.

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- ³⁷ Felman, 6.
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- ⁴⁰ Wilcox.
- ⁴¹ Felman, 7.
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